

January 6, 1951.

Mr. Palmer D. Skaar,
Department of Zoology,
Indiana University,
Bloomington, Indiana.

Dear Mr. Skaar:

I have your letter of January 4, proposing a research program that you would like to develop as a postdoctoral (Merck) fellow. Your proposals sound very attractive, and Professor Irwin and I have agreed to provide necessary facilities for you to carry out your work under this fellowship. A letter to the NRC is enclosed for your use, if desirable.

As a matter of fact, we had just begun a serious effort at a serogenetic analysis of *E. coli*, based upon the fact that a large series of distinct, intercrossable isolates is now available. By using a combination of nutritional and inhibitor selection methods (W-1177 x K-12, etc.) it has been feasible to test a large series of *E. coli* isolates, with a minimum of manipulation, for crossability with K-12. About 10% of the cultures examined give definite evidence of recombination, several of them verified by the older procedure using biochemical mutants. I mention this because I believe that this is more likely to provide useful material for serogenetic work than would material derived exclusively from K-12 itself. The work we are doing now is entirely preliminary, and was in fact designed to set the stage for an intensive study of the sort you are proposing. I have been looking for a student or postdoctorate fellow who might be qualified for this research, and since you have indicated your interest, I shall be pleased to leave the evaluation of your general qualifications to the fellowship board.

You must be aware that the competition for the Merck fellowships is so intense that the awards must be distributed more or less at random among the best-qualified candidates. In addition, the Merck awards are presumably designed to aid researchers who wish to master a distinct field from that of their Ph.D. work. It would be only sound caution for you to investigate other fellowship opportunities, in particular, NRC, USPHS, AEC, and possibly Committee on Growth or the Childs Fund. Beyond that, there is a slight possibility of a (non-permanent) project-associateship on research funds. If you would like to apply for the latter would you send me the usual documents. For letters, carbon copies of those to the Merck board will suffice.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg